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Freedom Watch

Citizens Project

Right Wing Flexes Muscle

The saga of the war-torn Republican Party heightened suspense this month when the usually placidly predictable neighborhood caucuses turned into chaotic coups d'etat. Locally and around the state, Republicans reported an influx of new "single issue" political activists, many of whom successfully unseated veteran precinct committee chairpersons. The newcomers seized the chairperson seats and delegate spots to the county and higher assemblies.

Perhaps the biggest ambush was in Boulder where county GOP chairman Bill Swenson and his wife Betty, a retired state legislator, lost their precinct committee leadership to the "New Right," whose political agenda pivots more on social than economic issues. The "New Right" encompasses political activists who advocate prayer in school, education vouchers, and limiting or eliminating abortion rights, among other related issues. Assessing the damage – stacked caucuses throughout the county – Swenson isn't assured enough delegates at the county GOP assembly to secure his candidacy for the state Legislature.

> **"Those vying for delegate spots usually pitch traditional party tenets and tout their volunteer tenure. Their credentials were seemingly unimportant next to hopefuls who cited their affiliation with Christian organizations and churches**

In another twist, conservative state Sen. Jim Roberts said his Republican caucus in Loveland was crashed by the CEA. According to Roberts, the teachers union encouraged Democrats to affiliate Republican to win delegate slots in favor of his opponent, Steve Farnham, a moderate Republican. Roberts lost his precinct committee post and barely won an alternate delegate slot to the county assembly. If both Roberts and Farnham get on the ballot, it's predicted more Democrats will register Republican to influence the primary election.

Locally, after hearing about political forums and seminars sponsored by Village Seven Presbyterian Church, Focus on the Family, Christian Coalition and others over the past two years, the El Paso County Republicans expected the "unexpected" – but, the result was still spine shivering for moderate party traditionals. Long-time Republican activists lost precinct committee chairs and delegate status to newcomers in key precincts. Those vying for delegate spots usually pitch traditional party tenets and tout their volunteer tenure. Their credentials were seemingly unimportant next to hopefuls who cited their affiliation with Christian organizations and churches.

The greatest impact was felt in house districts with contested Republican races, including HD18, HD20, HD22 and Senate District 9. Candidates who fall short of the required 30 percent delegate vote at the Republican assembly on May 30 have until June 3 to petition onto the ballot.

Whether or not you are a delegate to the county party assemblies, you may want to obtain more detailed information on the candidates' positions, should you wish to become involved in any of these races. The following is a summary of contested El Paso County Republican

[Continued on Page 2]

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Breaking Bread

For the past several months some of your neighbors have participated in a new and exciting "Dialogue Dinner" program. Nearly 40 people formed into four groups of eight to ten participants each to share their personal views on current social issues. Each group was composed of approximately equal numbers of "orthodox" and "progressive" participants as defined by sociologist James Davison Hunter in his excellent book *Culture Wars*. These participants agreed to attend at least three initial meetings.

These groups were started in the belief that direct interaction between those who hold differing views will increase understanding and help resolve conflict. The Dialogue Dinner process of informal meetings was designed to promote honest exchanges of opinions and to foster an appreciation for the humanity of each participant.

All four groups have now completed their first three dialogue meetings. As the results from our "exit poll" indicate, these group meetings have been successful. In fact, all of the groups have decided to continue to meet.

Are you interested? The Dialogue Dinners will soon be expanding to include additional orthodox and progressive individuals who are sincerely interested in learning more about others. If you would like more information about Dialogue Dinners, simply return the coupon located on page four of this newsletter.

Here is how current Dialogue Dinner participants responded to an informal survey.

Why did you volunteer to participate?

In answering this question, participants generally fell into two major categories: for myself (i.e., personal growth, curiosity, challenge) and for my community (i.e., bridge-building and healing). Interestingly, although many participants listed both reasons, progressives tended to identify personal reasons, while those identifying more with an orthodox perspective cited community and responsibility to a greater extent. (Fortunately, these two goals turned out to be very complementary.)

Did the Dialogues meet your expectations?

Nearly everyone from both perspectives said yes, and many insisted that the Dialogues had greatly exceeded their expectations. Several orthodox participants admitted that initially, they had been rather skeptical and uncertain of the whole endeavor. For some, just the avoidance of hostility and acrimony was viewed as a relatively positive outcome.

[Continued on Page 2]

News Briefs

Diversify your bumper stickers

Bumper stickers proclaiming "Promote Morality" have begun to appear on cars around town. Increased morality is a cause we can all get behind, and surprisingly, the new bumper sticker does not limit the diversity of religious and ethical moralities it promotes. This welcome inclusiveness has caused some Citizens Project supporters to proudly sport a "Promote Morality" sticker right next to their "Celebrate Diversity" stickers.

While these new bumper stickers are delightfully inclusive, this may be unintentional. The bumper stickers are actually the latest local-action project of Colorado For Family Values, a group not known for hospitality to values other than its own.

CFV's executive director Kevin Tebedo offered his spin on the compatibility of these two messages, remarking "It's like mixing matter and anti-matter." Despite Tebedo's unusual logic, proponents of morality and diversity may still wish to demonstrate that the two are not mutually exclusive concepts. For information on how to obtain both messages, contact our office.

A Bible for every student

Schools in Casper, Wyoming have agreed to allow Gideons International to distribute Bibles to public school fifth-graders, as they have done for the last ten years. To distribute the Bibles in schools, the Gideons must have the permission of each school principal, and they cannot talk to students during distribution. Bible distribution in public schools was found unconstitutional in a 1993 Seventh Circuit federal court decision *(Berger v. Central School, 982 F. 2d 1160)*, but to date no lawsuit has been filed in Casper.

Conservative evangelicals and Catholics sign accord

Thirty-nine prominent conservative Catholics and conservative evangelicals recently signed an agreement that each group will accept one another as Christian and will stop proselytizing each other. The accord also encourages joint activity against abortion and pornography, and for school vouchers. While the accord is not an official document, it signals a new cooperation on "family values" political issues. The accord was signed by Pat Robertson of Christian Coalition and Archbishop Francis Stafford of Denver, among others.

Bible 101

A Bristol, Virginia public school board recently voted to "study using the Bible for grammar, history and literature lessons," reports *The New York Times*. The school board wanted to use the King James version of the Bible as a text for academic subjects. This plan was denounced by the Virginia School Boards Association as a violation of the First Amendment's prohibition of government establishing a state religion. After receiving a legal opinion that the plan was unconstitutional, the school board hastily abandoned the idea. **CP**

Dialogue Dinners

[Continued from Page 1]

What surprised you the most?

The consensus response to this question was the discovery of "common ground." Despite holding diverse world views and beliefs concerning ultimate reality, these participants found themselves in agreement on a wide range of issues including topics like public health, education and even artistic expression. Others highlighted "how enjoyable the process was" and "how much work was required to develop and maintain trust." Especially striking to progressives was discovering that orthodox participants had "thought about the issues," while orthodox members were surprised that progressives often included values and moral principles in their arguments and observations.

Did you feel the experience was valuable? If so, how?

Once again responses from both groups were remarkably similar. Participants listed many positive outcomes: personal insight and awareness; better understanding of others; increased interpersonal skills and confidence that many conflicts within the community could be amicably resolved. One participant put it this way: "Many of my stereotypes have been replaced by friendships."

We hope to see the day when many more people in our community participate in this journey of discovery and understanding. We believe that Dialogue Dinners will help us all discover the wisdom in the ancient Welsh adage: "There's so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us, it doesn't behoove any of us to be hating any of the rest of us." **CP**

Right Wing Flexes Muscle

[Continued from Page 1]

races. The winners in the Republican primary (August 9) will face Democratic opponents in the general election. The full slate of Democratic candidates will be available after the Democratic county party assembly on April 23, as there are no contested Democratic races. (Freedom Watch *will report on the Democrats running for office in future issues. – Ed.)*

Senate District 9

State legislators Tom Ratterree of HD18 and Charlie Duke of HD20 are vying for the SD9 seat being vacated by state Sen. Mike Bird, who is a candidate for Governor. Ratterree and Duke describe themselves as "ultra conservative" Republicans with a difference in style. Ratterree believes his asset is building coalitions to pass or table bills; Duke claims a record for defending constitutional rights. Both men responded to an invitation from the Christian Coalition to participate in a political forum at Village Seven Presbyterian church. For more information, call Ratterree at 636-1005, Duke at 598-0200.

House District 18

Doug Dean, a telemarketing manager, and Ed Rasimus, a retired Air Force officer and aerospace engineer, are running for the Republican nomination from HD18. Dean is a conservative Republican who opposes state "standards-based" education and the national "outcomes-based education" (OBE), and forcing states to implement unfunded federally mandated programs. While Dean supports "back to basics" education, his opponent Rasimus favors education reform that balances skills and high technology with logic and creative thinking. A moderate Republican, Rasimus supports less government, freedom of speech and choice, and tougher sentencing for violent criminals. For more information, call Dean at 598-4920, and Rasimus at 528-8358.

> **Locally, after hearing about political forums and seminars sponsored by Village Seven Presbyterian Church, Focus on the Family, Christian Coalition and others over the past two years, the El Paso County Republicans expected the "unexpected..."**

House District 20

Republicans Doug Lamborn, Leonard Riley, both of Colorado Springs, and Max Rothschild of Castle Rock are announced candidates for HD20. An attorney, Lamborn said he is running because he "would rather light a candle than curse the darkness." Lamborn opposes unfunded federal mandates, abortions on demand, increased taxes and spending, welfare that is a "permanent lifestyle" and soft sentencing for criminals.

A political science professor at Pikes Peak Community College, Riley is campaigning on a platform of tougher sentencing for violent criminals and repeat offenders, education reform, and better management of state revenue.

Although Rothschild now resides in Douglas County, he is the retired director of public works in El Paso County. Rothschild advocates education that provides more technical skills, improved state fiscal management and accountability, and new solutions to mass transit problems. For more information about the candidates, call Lamborn at 471-1441, Riley at 599-9359, and Rothschild at 596-7391 in Colorado Springs.

House District 22

State Rep. Marcy Morrison is again being challenged by Ken Gray, who lost in the primary race by 27 votes in 1992. Despite state and local Republican Party officials asking Gray to sit out this dance – hoping to avoid a primary battle or losing the HD 22 seat to a Democrat – Gray sent postcards to remind supporters to attend their caucus. Less than a week later, Gray announced his candidacy.

A moderate Republican, Morrison is a fiscal conservative, and an advocate for better education and environment, less government and individual freedoms. Morrison is a former El Paso County Commissioner and was a member of the Manitou Springs school board. Her opponent, Gray, is a former Operation Rescue lawyer who recently gained media attention as the progun spokesman for the local chapter of the NRA. He opposes unfunded federal mandates, "outcome-based education" (OBE), and favors stronger sentencing for criminals. For more information, call Morrison at 685-5929, or Gray at 473-7350/540-9066. **CP**

– Leslie Jorgensen

(Jorgensen is contributing editor to the Colorado Statesman.)

Eye On Schools

Community-wide

Playing yet another tune, Colorado for Family Values (CFV), the self-described "one string guitar" which vowed to keep Amendment 2 as its focus, jumped squarely into public education by attacking the Colorado Parent-Teacher Association (CPTA) for their proposed resolution promoting access to information about homosexuality. Claiming the PTA resolution came "straight off the word processor of the homosexual lobby," CFV published the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the current Colorado PTA executive committee members and urged members to call them. CFV's goal: to halt discussion of the resolution at this week's state PTA convention.

Cheyenne Mountain District 12

The District 12 school board is now holding discussion meetings once a month at various district schools. These meetings are informal opportunities for the public to share their opinions with the board. May's meeting is on May 11 at 7:30 p.m. Contact Julie Willis for location at 630-1466.

District 12 school board member Keith King has proposed the creation of a charter school de-emphasizing critical thinking skills and using instead the Core Knowledge Curriculum developed by Ed Hirsch Jr. and his Cultural Literacy Foundation.

Assistant Superintendent Caryl Thomason recently updated the school board on the status of the first social studies text selection in a decade. Board member Pat Maggio expressed his desire that community members be involved in this selection process at each stage.

For more information about District 12 activities, contact Julie Willis at 630-1466.

Air Academy District 20

Residents of Air Academy District 20 who are concerned about the divisive issues beginning to unfold at several of the district's schools will hold an informational and organizational meeting. Challenges to evolution, sexuality education and multiculturalism are growing, and many are concerned. The meeting is at Eagleview Middle School on Thursday, May 5 at 7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Debbie Carter at 495-0006.

District 20 is currently accepting applications from parents/community volunteers who wish to serve on sex education curriculum committees for its high school and middle school programs. Applications are available from the district. The deadline is April 29.

Liberty High School

An event sponsored by River of Life Church and held at Liberty High School drew criticism when organizers failed to follow established protocol for having an after hours event. Fliers, advertising the event as a "Spring Fling," appeared on desks and in student lockers, despite an explicit agreement not to promote the event during school hours. The fliers said nothing about the event being religious in nature. Further, the event, which was scheduled to begin a full hour after classes concluded, started early with live band music and free pizza available as students were leaving classes. An administration spokesperson at Liberty explained that groups not abiding by the contractual agreement would not be allowed to rent school facilities in the future. For more information, contact Mike Fisher at 528-6920.

Lewis-Palmer

Overt religious promotion in Lewis-Palmer High School's paper *The Ranger Review* have prompted concern from parents and teachers in the district. The February 25 issue contained two items of dubious legality. The first includes an announcement of an on-campus, lunchtime Bible study where teacher "and sponsor Don Lash will supply a Bible." The second item, an essay/prayer laced with Scripture and signed "In your precious name, Amen," rails against sinners "who do not know" God, highlighting homosexuality. Concerned residents from the district are currently awaiting a legal opinion on the material. **CP**

Legal Updates

School prayer proliferates

Legislation has been introduced in eleven states to permit student-initiated prayers at public school graduations or other school functions. One school prayer bill has become law in Tennessee, although the Tennessee Attorney General has issued an opinion that such mandatory school prayers are unconstitutional. While the school prayer bills vary in their provisions, all would permit "nonsectarian, nonproselytizing" prayers at school graduations. Some of the bills would also allow student-initiated prayers at athletic contests and assemblies; a pending Mississippi bill goes further to allow prayers at any school events.

These bills follow on the heels of a federal Fifth Circuit court decision permitting student prayers at high school graduations (reviewed in last November's *Freedom Watch*). While the Fifth Circuit's permission covers only Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, advocates of school prayer have been encouraged by this case to push for public school prayers throughout the United States. Many legal experts are dubious that the bills will pass constitutional muster, but such "God and Country" legislation is politically popular. The Tennessee bill passed with only one opposing vote in each house, and the U.S. Senate recently approved a school prayer encouragement by a 75-22 vote.

Will making students pray solve our public school problems? Some think so. "Putting God back in our schools is the answer," says the advocacy group Christians Revolutionizing America for Christ. However, a few conservative Christian groups are becoming concerned that allowing public school prayers to be inclusive toward all religions will be anti-Christian in effect. The problem, according to *Biblical Worldview* magazine, is that "Christianity will be just one religion among many." In addition, some worry that simple prayers to "God" will not sufficiently identify the God of the Bible, and consequently these school prayers might lead students astray from "true" Christianity. Other groups have expressed concern that school prayers weak enough to be acceptable legally (should the Supreme Court find them to be constitutional) will be too impotent to make any real difference in students' lives.

Impressions school books upheld

In a February court decision, the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit held that the *Impressions* reading series is used to "enhance students' reading skills and develop their senses of imagination and creativity" and does not constitute the establishment of a pagan religion. Conservative Christian parents in Wheaton, Illinois had sued the local school district, claiming that *Impressions*, used in the elementary schools, violated the First Amendment to the United States Constitution by establishing a religion of paganism, witchcraft and satanism in the schools which was offensive to their Christian beliefs. According to the allegations of the parents, this "religion" included a belief in "parental disrespect," as shown by the humorous stories in *Impressions* in which a child outwits a parent.

The judges found that *Impressions* did not establish a religion. The court first commented on the small minority of stories that dealt with any sort of pagan religion, and observed that the reading series also included stories on Catholic and Protestant religious beliefs and practices. The court then noted that the purpose of the stories in the *Impressions* series is to stimulate the imagination of children, rather than to establish a religion of any sort.

The judges also found that using *Impressions* did not interfere with the free exercise of the parents' religion. *Impressions*, said the judges, helps the school teach the important values of "tolerance of divergent political and religious views" and helps students take into account "the sensitivities of others." The use of *Impressions* by the school does not preclude the complaining parents from meeting their religious obligations to their children.

The strongly-stated conclusions of the court were that *Impressions* taught important values and that the series easily passed constitutional muster. The case also contained this minor but interesting footnote: "Many of the stories involving witches are sequenced to emphasize a Halloween theme. The American tradition of celebrating the eve of All Saints' Day is certainly a secular one."

Can government aid a particular religion?

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide an establishment of religion case involving a community of Hasidic Jews. The question: can the state constitutionally set up a school district that contains only Hasidic Jews in order to provide services for handicapped students, even though those services are readily available nearby? In this case, the conservative Jewish community, which educates its children in local private schools, said that its handicapped students were traumatized when they had to mix with nearby public school students to receive needed special educational services. In response, the state of New York established a unique school district that encompassed only the Hasidic Jewish community, so that these special educational services could be provided within that community.

The New York courts held that the special education services were already available to these children, and the establishment of a separate school district for this religious community was primarily to assist a particular religion, thereby violating the Constitution's First Amendment establishment-of-religion clause. Supporters of the Hasidic Jews argue that government needs to do more to support the special needs of religious groups. Oral arguments were held in the Supreme Court last month; the Supreme Court will announce its decision yet this year. **CP**

Announcements

Mainstream Coalition forms

The American Mainstream Coalition recently formed in Lakewood, Colorado. Their mission: "We educate the public about efforts to impose social homogeneity upon our nation, and promote tolerance for the religious beliefs and cultural differences of all our citizens." For more information or to join, you can phone them at (303) 989-0326 or write them at Box 260537, Lakewood, CO 80226.

City council petition

Michael Merrifield is petitioning the Colorado Springs City Council to have all council meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. rather than holding these meetings during the day. Later meetings will allow more working people to participate and will also encourage working people to run for city council. If you are interested in helping get signatures on these petitions, call Michael at 520-2536 (work) or 636-9384 (home).

Diversity Chorus

If you are interested in singing in the Diversity Chorus, call Lynn at 630-8665. The Chorus meets Wednesday evenings, and all are welcome.

Women's Lobby forms

Colorado joins 26 other states in having a women's lobby for research and action in the Colorado Legislature. Women's Lobby is interested in legislation concerning spousal maintenance, child support, health care, family preservation, and other programs. If you would like more information about Women's Lobby, call 386-8850 in Colorado Springs or 303-592-3988 in Denver.

Program looks at the Bill of Rights

The Pikes Peak Library District is doing a series of panels covering "The Bill of Rights and Beyond." Panel discussions include: "Thomas Jefferson's Perspective" (May 11), "Separation of Church and State" (May 18), "Freedom of Speech and Press" (May 25), "The Right to Bear Arms" (June 1), and "Cruel and Unusual Punishments" (June 8). These discussions promise to be lively and informative. All programs take place at the East Library and Information Center and begin at 7 p.m. For more information, call 531-6333, Ext. 2301. **CP**

First Tuesday

Our next May "First Tuesday" meeting will feature a panel discussion on the growing controversy over sex education and public schools.

Panelists:

Rose Enyert,
Reduced Adolescent Pregnancy Coalition

Sid Snyder,
Parent and former member of the Challenger Middle School Sex Education Curriculum Review Committee

Kris Monroe,
Colorado Springs Pregnancy Center

Dr. John Muth,
Director, El Paso County Health Department

Sharon Latrell,
Director, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

There will be time for informal questions and answers following the panel presentations.

Tuesday, May 3 at 7 p.m.
East Library and Information Center
Call 520-9899 for more information

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Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion and separation of church and state.

Yes, I would like to help support Citizens Project. Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $15 ❑ $30 ❑ $50 ❑ $100 ❑ Other

Contributors of $15 or more will receive future issues of *Freedom Watch* and candidate surveys by mail, and will also receive special notices about Citizens Project activities.

❑ Yes! I want more information about how to participate in Dialogue Dinners.

❑ Please send the following information:

Available for a suggested donation of $2 each
- ○ Two back issues of *Freedom Watch*
- ○ The ETR Associates Sex Education study

Available for free
- ○ "Celebrate Diversity" bumper sticker

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❑ Please charge my: ○ MasterCard ○ Visa
Card Number: _____
Signature: _____ Exp. Date: ___/___

Mail to: Citizens Project, Box 2085, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. N33
Thank you for your support. Please note contributions are not tax deductible.

Inside CP

Going ape over teachers

Please join us April 29, 7 to 10 p.m., for our Spring party when we celebrate the important contributions of area teachers. Guests of honor will be former Governor Dick Lamm and his wife Dottie, a Denver Post columnist. Tickets are still available. For tickets or more information, contact Citizens Project at 520-9899.

Volunteer update

To get involved, contact Marj or Christine at the office, 520-9899.

We need a couple of individuals with event organizing experience to handle two planned events – a Walk-a-Thon and a Silent Auction – both coming later this year.

We could still use some morning or afternoon office help. Contact Christine at the office if you're interested.

Citizens Project has just established a community service group called "Good Citizens." Our first project is the adoption of a median located on Wahsatch between Uintah and Jefferson Street which we will keep clean. The median will bear a sign placed there by the city crediting Citizens Project. If you can afford a few hours each month for this project, be a "Good Citizen" and contact Jay Norman at 260-5966.

Ever adopt a book?

A major part of Citizens Project's mission is providing information. Central to this goal is developing and maintaining a library as a resource for our community. The following is a wish-list of books which are available for "adoption." If you're moved to sponsor a particular book through a cash donation, contact Shelley Anckner at the office. We'll acknowledge your adoption with a commemorative label on the inside cover.

Culture Wars
by James Davison Hunter, $15.

Culture of Disbelief
by Stephen Carter, $25.

Against the Night
by Chuck Colson, $15.

The Way We Never Were
by Stephanie Coontz, $14.

The Turning Tide
by Pat Robertson, $25.

Race Matters
by Cornel West, $15. **CP**

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